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ABSTRACT

The last 2 decades of curriculum policy in Australia are reviewed in this paper, with a focus on reforms concerned with females and schooling. Two general areas are examined: (1) the theoretical relationship between state power and feminist concerns about schooling; and (2) the progressive direction for schooling. The first section compares two policy frameworks of the mid-1970s and late 1980s, and the second part examines ways in which feminist demands in education are being integrated within Australian state policy. Three themes concerning the state and feminist action are discussed. First, state policy in liberal-democratic societies will continue to modify challenges to power, due to the inherently exclusive nature of conflicting discourse. Second, the state has used feminist discourse to increase funding of engineering, science, and technology. The field of gender and education is viewed by the government as a problem of women of nontraditional careers. Third, the commitment to equal education has been used to increase centralization of the school system, leading to more control, regulation, and surveillance. Conclusions are that a commitment to different forms of knowledge is in itself a universalizing framework and that vigorous critical engagement with equal education opportunity policies continues to be important. (54 references) (LMI)

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A TALE FULL OF SOUND AND FURY - SIGNIFYING WHAT? FEMINISM AND CURRICULUM POLICY IN AUSTRALIA

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INTRODUCTION

Feminism is characterized by some commitment both to critique and to a project for change. In education, and particularly in relation to schooling, it has been far stronger as critique than as vision of a more progressive practice. It is easier to rehearse the sexism of a past era, or of a noticeably unsympathetic government, than to address reflexively where our own arguments are taking us. In this paper I want to reflect on the past two decades of curriculum policy in Australia, a period characterized by a very significant amount of attention to reforms concerned with girls and schooling. The two general questions that underlie the discussion are these. How should we theorize the possibilities and the constraints of state power in relation to feminist concerns about schooling? And, secondly, what would a progressive direction for schooling actually look like?

In Australia, in contrast to the UK, the USA and New Zealand, Labor Governments, formally committed to programs of social reform, have held power throughout the 1980s. It is true that these Labor governments share many elements of 'new right' economic rationalism with conservative governments in other countries. Nevertheless, the formal commitments and associations of the Australian governments point to a somewhat differently constituted field of theoretical and political questions for feminist analysis. (There is some parallel in recent feminist discussion of the history of reformist education policy in Sweden. (Andrae-Thelin and Elqvist-Salzman, 1989).

For one thing, the relationship between 'radical' intellectual production and public policy is framed differently in this setting:

> In Australia, a Left largely given to the pursuit of socialist science in the 1970s has now itself become deeply involved in the production and advocacy of policy.
>
> (Beilharz, 1987, p.388)

And particularly is this the case in relation to education policy (cf.Yates, 1987) and in relation to feminism.

Commentators exploring Australian feminism's heavy concern with state policy and with achieving power in the state bureaucracies, have drawn attention to the 'state-centric' nature of Australia (Yeatman, 1988) (1) as well as to the very large public sector in the composition of the Australian workforce (Porter, 1983; Franzway, Court and Connell, 1989). Considerable attention has been given to critiques of feminist involvement in the state, focussing in particular on 'femocrats' and on how such women working within state political and bureaucratic institutions are incorporated and contained. But there has also been a sustained attempt to defend the inescapability for feminist politics of working within this sphere, as well as an attempt to examine reflexively the sources and re-formations of power within this sphere and the strengths of different strategies of reform. (cf. Baldock and Cass, 1983; Eisenstein, 1988; Yeatman, 1988, 1990; Franzway, Court and Connell, 1989; Yates, 1990a).

The interest of this paper in curriculum policy concerned with non-sexist education takes up these continuing concerns. It is presuming that schooling as a system (and as a compulsory form of acculturation) will continue to be important and that, at least in Australia, the formulation of policy is an arena in which the formulations and debates of academics have had and can have some impact. In this context, the discussion of two national policies developed for girls and schooling also raises some reflexive issues for feminist academics concerning the meaning of their own formulations of curriculum theory in a specific historical and cultural context, and as a potential source of programmatic formulations for a system of schooling. Secondly, the paper will be concerned with what happens to feminist issues as they get taken up as state policy. Here we are looking not simply at how feminism might possibly relate to an overall system of schooling, but at how feminist agendas are positioned in the context of other agendas of state action.

Some Background

In May 1987 the Schools Commission in Australia issued a *National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools*. The policy represented a new development in the governance of schooling in Australia. It was the first 'national' policy for schools. Formally, schooling in Australia is a responsibility of the individual states rather than the federal government. The federal government since the 1960s had attempted to influence some of the shape of schooling, primarily through financial grants tied to specific purposes. However the current Labor government is committed to developing a 'unified national system' of education. It has already almost completed this objective in the tertiary sector, forcing amalgamations and new lines of direct accountability to the Commonwealth government. However, it has no constitutional basis for directing schooling. Here the government is trying to produce unified practices (including a national core curriculum) by a mixture of incentives, threats and sponsoring of frameworks. For any particular such initiative it has to gain voluntary assent from State Ministers of Education (and, if possible, from representatives of the non-state schooling systems (2)).

In its content too the *National Policy for the Education of Girls* represented a new development after 12 years of government inquiries and reports and lobbying by feminist groups, most of whom had called for a framework that was 'more comprehensive' and that would introduce greater compulsion for schools to take part in reform. How then does this policy define the progressive agenda for girls as compared, on the one hand, with previous policy formulations, and, on the other, with current debates within feminist theory about the form of a progressive practice?

In the next part of the paper I will discuss some aspects of the content of the current policy, as frameworks by which schooling might address sexual inequality. Following that I will return to the issue of the policy as policy, and the problem of the uses of feminism by the State.

Theorizing Sexual Inequality and Education: the Changing Shape of Policy

A comparison of the 1987 *National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools* with the initial 1975 Commonwealth Report on this area, *Girls, School and Society*, is a salutary exercise. For it not only raises questions about how governments may constrain, shape, transform and 'tame' feminism. It raises questions too about the partial nature of much feminist writing in education in terms of a direction for practice.

(In discussing the text of two national policy documents here I am not assuming that they translate straightforwardly into practices, either of the government or of schools (an issue I will take further in the next section). Nevertheless the changing emphases to which I am drawing attention I would argue are reflected in a wide range of curriculum projects, academic writing and policy statements over the same period.)

The 1975 policy had many of the hallmarks which feminist theorists dismiss as a 'liberal' (meaning individualist and non-radical) approach. The problem of sexism, it suggested, was apparent in the invisibility and biased treatment of women in the curriculum, but this effectively was an oversight, a contingent matter at odds with the principles for which education was designed, which themselves were sound:

> Sexism is a process through which females and males not only progressively learn that different things are required and expected of them because of their sex, but learn these things in an unexamined way. Good education is incompatible with such a process; central to it is the examination of assumptions and the rational consideration of alternatives. Hence 'sexist education' is a contradiction in terms; good education is non-sexist, it makes no assumptions about sex differences.
>
> (*Girls, School and Society*, 1975, p.17)

So there was a belief in liberal education as one which would give access to real knowledge about the world (as opposed to distortions and stereotypes) and whose mode was to develop critical reasoning.

Girls, School and Society would also be written off by many of the feminist theories of the 1980s and '90s for its treatment of girls and women. There is no acknowledgement - indeed there is a rejection - of any theory that women have different 'ways of knowing'. (This is hardly surprising given that in 1975 such theories of difference were largely represented by psychological rationales of women's inferiority rather than by the exploration of difference as a suppressed term and condition of language and culture as seen in later French feminist writings and American object-relations theorists.)

Even more strikingly from the perspective of the '90s, differences among women are not seen as central to an analysis. Instead, the report discusses 'woman's changing role' (not even 'women') and outlines a 'universalizing' case about sexual inequality and sexism. A late chapter, entitled 'groups with special needs', treats these as an

addendum to the main argument. The groups are defined as 'migrant girls and women', 'Aboriginal girls and women' and 'country girls and women'. (The point here is discussed further in Tsolidis, 1988; Yates, 1989, 1990; Kenway, 1990.)

Nevertheless, there are elements of this early analysis which have a political force which is in danger of being lost in more recent developments of policy and theory. A key one is that the issue of gender and schooling, or girls and schooling, is named explicitly as an issue relating to the overall sexual inequality of women in society. Women's place in the division of labour is at the heart of this analysis, and not just in the sense of 'why aren't a few more women doing science?':

> An observer not raised with our cultural assumptions would be struck by the fact that one half of the population was assigned by birth to activities which, whatever their private gratifications and social importance, carried no economic reward, little public status, and very limited access to public power. Such an observer would note that the terms on which the female population was admitted to public, economically rewarded activities were such as to ensure that they retained inferior positions in them.
>
> (*Girls, School and Society*, 1975, p.8)

Notwithstanding its ethnocentric assumption that all cultures would be as interested in 'economic reward', 'public status' and 'public power'as the measures of what was important about a society, this report is acknowledging as a central issue that history and culture have produced in mainstream Australian society a form of public/private relationships that subordinates women.

Secondly, *Girls, School and Society* has a clear proposition about how schooling, a compulsory institution in which young people are inducted into the culture, might be expected to contribute to change. It should teach students (girls and boys) a different history, a different account of the world, one which attends to women as much as to men. And it should interrupt the taken-for-grantedness of students' enculturation into gender by asking them to 'examine' this.

By 1987, the influence of a further 15 years of feminist research and action could be seen in the framework of the new *National Policy*. No 'universalizing' here. Being a girl in an Australian school, the policy makes clear, means being different sorts of girls in different sorts of locations:

> Strategies to improve the quality of education for girls should be based on an understanding that girls are not a homogeneous group.
>
> (*National Policy for the Education of Girls*, 1987, 'Policy Framework')

Nor is there such a clear assumption that 'liberal education', with adjustments, is all that is required for progressive action. This policy places much more emphasis on the 'educational needs of girls'. One of its four objectives is named as the

development of a 'supportive school environment'. Another refers to 'equal access to and participation in appropriate curriculum'.

Two different lines of feminist argument have now entered the field. One is the taking up of 'women's ways of knowing' and the challenges this poses to 'rationality' (for example, Gilligan, 1977, 1982; Gilligan, Lyons and Hanmer, 1990; Martin, 1982, 1984; Harding and Sutoris, 1987). The other is the insistence on differences amongst women. This has been heard as a prominent challenge by feminists speaking from subordinated race and ethnic positions (see, for example, the exchanges in *Feminist Review* 17 (July 1984), 25 (March 1987) and 26 (July 1987); and in Australia, Tsolidis, 1984, 1986; Bottomley and de Lepervanche, 1984). And it is heard in the feminist interest in a post-structuralist deconstruction and interrogation of all claims to a correct line as inscribing the power of dominance (cf. Spivak, 1987, Lather, 1989).

In the policy changes in relation to girls and schooling of the 1987 *National Policy* we have what at first looks like a more critical, a more sensitive, a more powerful approach: an approach that is more comprehensive, more systematic, more challenging of traditional assumptions about liberal education, more attuned to the claims of minority groups. From a post-structuralist perspective we might already be alert to some features of this policy reconstruction of the discourse: for should not 'more sensitive . . . more attuned to the claims of minority groups' be seen as a contending discourse to the 'more powerful', 'more systematic' agenda? What does it mean to bring these together? One way we might describe what is taking place in the policy changes referred to above is as a change as one from a concern about women (and women's inequality) in society to one concerned with girls' comfort in school.

This point is particularly apparent if we consider how policies specifically construct the claims of Koori girls (3), girls of non-English speaking background (4) or working-class girls. Although the statements of the 1980s eschew the deficit perspectives of earlier formulations (formally, that is, the research and policy proclaims that any problem is not in the girls, it is in what schooling is doing), strategies of action are heavily oriented to the 'needs' of particular groups rather than to any acknowledgement of ongoing power of the dominant groups, or of structural elements maintaining the status quo. (Yates, 1990b)

A second aspect of policy change that is linked to changing lines of feminist theory and which raises questions about these is the concept of curriculum. In the '70s and for much of the '80s the approach that was being taken assumed either a liberal concept of knowledge (whose basic lines were sound, but whose biases and omissions needed remedy) or a neo-Marxist line of ideology critique (students were to be taught to understand the nature of power and inequality in their own society, including in their own school). In either case the thrust is one which suggests that schooling can provide a basis whereby students can learn the foundations of a true and powerful picture of their society. In the more recent period, the lines of what is to be learnt are less clear. The Australian policy discourse concerning 'inclusive' curriculum largely implies that ethnic, race and gender differences can be drawn on and integrated, as if no challenge, no questioning of power, no anti-racism, no

competing notions of rationality were at issue. (Yates, 1988, 1989; Suggett, 1987) Or, paradoxically, it becomes an issue of pedagogy, where particular groups get 'appropriate' teaching, and the question of what is happening to dominant groups is little addressed. (Kalantzis and Cope, 1987; Yates, 1989.)

It might be objected that feminist theorizing is little implicated in these constructions of difference, that they are a mis-representation both of the challenge from subordinated groups and of the insistence on critical deconstruction associated with post-structuralism (or, indeed of autobiographical methods as curriculum theory, cf. Grumet, 1981). But I would suggest that it is relevant to consider what such critical approaches might look like in an actual schooling setting, and also to consider what direction of policy change might count as a progressive move.

A point I want to draw attention to in terms of a symposium on 'feminist politics and the struggle for social justice in education' is this. Political categorizations of strategies as 'liberal', 'socialist' or 'radical' are inadequate in so far as they assess positions as abstract philosophy, rather than as an intervention in a particular national and historical context. (They are also, probably, inadequate ways of dividing up feminism in any case, cf. Franzway, Court and Connell, 1989, Yates, 1987) It is a point I have made too in reviewing the enthusiasm of academics and left practitioners for democracy within schools, and 'non-competitive' assessment as the solution to social inequality: the danger that schooling practices are judged as radical in themselves, losing sight of school's specific location in its society. (cf. Yates, 1987)

This point was made well over a decade ago by Mica Nava (1980) when she assessed two of the early books addressing gender and education, Eileen Byrne's *Women and Education* (1978) and Rosemary Deem's (1978) *Women and Schooling*. Byrne's work, Nava wrote, was marked by a naivety of theoretical framework, by contradictions, and by a 'quaint' and rambling style ('We need a simple national declaration that it is no longer British to discriminate'). Yet, Nava argues, Byrne's case nevertheless captures a 'positive political engagement', an uncompromising attack on male blindness which perpetuates the invisibility of girls in official documents, and a workable program of (admittedly partial) reforms. Deem's work, Nava argued, was set in a more sophisticated Althusserian framework yet in fact offered a less clear intervention in relation to schooling and sexism. More significantly, Deem in fact at a level of strategy supported 'reformist' action which implicitly brought into question the theoretical framework she had used, by recognizing 'the heterogeneous nature of the structures of oppression'. (Nava, 1980, p.74)

This is not an argument against theory, nor a proposal that theory be judged solely in terms of the concerns of teachers or policy-makers. (cf. Yates, 1990a) But it is a reminder that what in fact is being drawn on by teachers or by policy-makers should be one basis for reflecting back on that theory.

The problems I am alluding to regarding the containment resulting from an emphasis on difference and local sensitivity in curriculum approaches to gender is made on the basis of an empirical judgement of how approaches within schools and curriculum

development projects in Australia have actually developed. But it is linked to a much-debated issue within contemporary feminist theory: the viability of post-structuralism as the form of a feminist political framework. (Alcoff, 1987; Lather, 1989) The lines of the debate frequently pose the problem of regulation, domination and power represented by any universalizing theory (including theories of liberation) against problems of relativism and disunity and commitment if we disown some general feminist association and analysis.

But schooling is not a political association of those committed to a project of social change. It still remains compulsory not just for subordinated groups, but for dominant groups as well. The question then is not simply whether eschewing a belief in foundation knowledge and embracing deconstruction is powerful for girls, students of minority race and ethnic backgrounds, students of working-class backgrounds. It is also whether universalizing deconstruction and difference as curriculum policy (as some contemporary renovation of year 12 curriculum in Australia is seeming to do, cf. White, 1987-8; Luke and Luke, 1990) can be appropriately addressed by simply calling for yet more deconstruction and critique. I will return to these issues in the final part of the paper.

Feminism and the State

In Australia, wages are broadly structured by awards determined under a centralized 'arbitration' system. Recently, as the result of initiatives by the federal government, there has been a major re-structuring of teacher career paths, in particular through the introduction of a new promotion classification, 'advanced skills teacher'. In terms of rhetoric, this position was claimed as one designed to recognize the classroom 'skills' of the teacher, to begin to overturn a career structure which rewarded only qualifications and administration. At the time of writing, teachers are being assessed for these positions. The guidelines for these applications emphasize above all else that teachers are to be judged on their knowledge of and commitment to current government policy. In Victoria, they are expected to know the Labor Government's 'Social Justice' policy for education and the more specific policies related to 'equal opportunity' for girls and 'inclusive curriculum'. They are asked to show what actions and initiatives they have taken in terms of such policies.

Career paths for teachers in Victoria also offer in each school a number of special responsibility positions (SRAs), which are rewarded with additional pay. 'SRAs' are tagged to cover areas such as 'professional development of teachers', 'curriculum', and 'equal opportunity'. By common repute, the 'equal opportunity' positions are the least popular ones to take on.

Or consider this. Most states have now developed affirmative action employment policies for teachers which heavily regulate the gender composition of appointment committees, the texts of advertisements, appointment procedures. They are also associated with in-service training of both appointing committees and female applicants to improve the chances of women being promoted. (In contrast to the USA, there has not been a use of quotas.) These strategies to date have produced litttle change in the shape of the hierarchies of teaching (a majority of women in the

lowest positions; a minority in the senior positions, particularly as principals of schools), as well as many complaints from male teachers and newspaper columnists and also a spate of complaints from female principals, that such approaches constitute 'gender charity', that they construct as token the women who are successful, and undermine their credibility.

In the past decade, theorists have generally moved away from seeing the state as a monolithic entity, protecting and furthering an identifiable and single set of dominant interests through its ideological and repressive apparatuses. Instead, we are made aware, there is not one set of dominant interests, but a set of intersecting, and sometimes contradictory, regulating discourses. We are warned of the dangers of even continuing with a potentially reifying concept like 'the State'. Notwithstanding all this, feminists have continued to be interested in identifying the forms of discursive regulation represented in contemporary government policy, and in practice develop analyses which exhibit some continuity with earlier identifications of the ideological and contradictory characteristics of education policy and sexual inequality. (For example, although Taylor etc couches its recent account in the post-structuralist language favoured today, the substance of the analysis is more striking for its continuity than for its difference from earlier formulations, such as MacDonald, 1981 and Porter, 1983.) In this section I want to discuss briefly three continuing themes concerning the state and feminist action in education as they relate to the developments in Australia outlined above.

One is that state policy in liberal-democratic societies will continue to assert and 'naturalize' the rule of law, the rights of individuals, the absence of structured conflict and inequalities of power, and will modify challenges of groups given political legitimacy (here, the women's movement) where they propose any fundamental challenge to these principles. As Yeatman puts this in her discussion of a large range of Labor Government policies in Australia:

> The feature which all these have in common as instances of the policy genre concerns the way in which the interest of the state in the management of issues means that the policy text is written in such a way as to deny the politics of discourse (a politics of contested meaning).
>
> (Yeatman, 1990, p.160)

In relation to the policy on gender and schooling, a number of writers (McHoul, 1984; Arnot, 1986; Lingard, Henry and Taylor, 1987; Kenway, 1990; Middleton, 1990) have shown how the language of feminist politics is taken up but transformed and contained when it is made policy. The point being made in Yeatman's analysis is that the transformation and containment takes place not simply because policy-makers represent a 'ruling class', and not because there is a deliberate effort to continue to subordinate subordinate groups, but because contested meaning, contested lines of exclusion and inclusion, contested vision, are excluded in the terms of its own discourse.

This is seen most clearly in the treatment of 'difference' in the policies I have discussed. 'Difference' becomes transformed into mere variety which can be held together in a common schooling. It is not acknowledged as a challenge concerning the fundamental shape of that schooling (of rationality, of language, of what knowledge is important). In contrast to the reasonably vigorous debate within feminism about centre and margins, about post-colonialism, about feminisms, in policy terms the taking up of claims about women's ways of knowing or about Koori self-determination are treated as part of incremental reform, not as contesting what is to count as the problem. In these circumstance, I would suggest that moves to girl-centred or Koori-centred or 'multicultural' curricula can be a politically weaker version of a universalizing liberal approach rather than the affirmative step it may be in other contexts.

A second theme concerns where feminism stands relative to the economic interests of the state. Formally the Labor Government in Australia is committed both to affirmative action for women and to economic rationalism. Formally too these are constructed as two separate discourses, yet they are mutually constituting in a particular way.

In schools as in higher education, government money committed to women and education has been overwhelmingly reserved for increasing their numbers in mathematics and science. (cf. *Girls in Schools*, 1988; Yates, 1990 a) Discussing the White Paper on Higher Education (1988), Yeatman notes,

> Government rhetoric asserting the desirability of getting girls at school into 'non-traditional' areas for girls recreates gender inequality by discursively constructing the problem of getting 'girls' into 'non-traditional' areas. Moreover, the Government's continuing to give funding priority to engineering, science and technology means less funds for the areas of professional training and higher education into which women do go, and from which they enter the labour markets that are open to them.
>
> (Yeatman, 1990, p.166)

Indeed the discursive construction of the field of gender and education as the problem of women and non-traditional careers is a very significant aspect of contemporary developments. It excludes a construction of boys and men as a problem, and it reconstructs a discourse of education as related to production and the public world in a period when many feminist writers on education have been mounting critiques of this (cf. Martin, 1982; Gilligan, 1977). It is also constructing (and 'naturalizing') the broader problem of women's position in society as being a result of their individual choices and achievments. And as well, it is using a discourse of women's rights to construct an agenda to increase funding to engineering, science and technology, and to construct these rather than the service sector (which is in fact the major employment area) as the important part of the workforce.

A third theme that the curriculum policy developments of this era raises is that of control, regulation, surveillance and the feminist agenda. It has been noted that the

commitments to non-sexist education have been used as part of an increased centralized shaping by the Commonwealth Government of the schooling system, and for an increased regulation and surveillance of activity in schools. Teachers, schools, selection committees, state systems of schooling, are now all required to spend a good deal of time documenting, checking, accounting for their activities in relation to girls and schooling. The National Policy discussed earlier was a formal framework. Its immediate concrete application as practice was required in the form of an annual furnishing of reports at all levels, and the compiling and maintenance by the Commonwealth of a 'national data base'.

The form of this development, issued in the name of an acceptance of feminist critiques, brings with it some problems. The greater the incursion into schools of the forms of bureaucratic management, the greater the evaluation of them in terms of instrumental and measurable productions, the less is likely to be the space for the pedagogic conditions of any lively critical pedagogy.(cf. Ferguson, 1984; Kenway and Blackmore, 1988) Secondly, the institution of new forms of control designed for progressive ends remain to be used for other purposes as the political climate changes. (5) And thirdly, as the examples at the beginning of this section were designed to illustrate, the developments are building a considerable resentment and evasion by teachers. Yet across all this we need to remember that one source of these developments was a call for greater regulation and enforcement of 'non-sexist' principles by a wide range of feminist groups concerned with education and disenchanted with the effectiveness of the decentralized and piecemeal activity of the first wave of reform.

Feminism and Curriculum Theory

In part this paper is a reminder that feminist curriculum theory is not simply about critique and vision, but is also about particular contexts. These days we are reminded often enough to distrust Grand Theory and universal answers. However, one point that my comparison of two particular policy frameworks of the mid-'70s and late-'80s was intended to show is that, certainly in the context of schooling, a commitment to difference and to local knowledge is itself a universalizing framework which needs to be assessed in terms of what it produces for all students.

The second part of the paper discussed a number of ways that feminist demands in education are being constructed within state policy in Australia. It is apparent that the systemic and general cultural characteristics of schooling are an important consideration for feminists working in education and an important shaping condition for what is possible in an individual classroom. In Australia, as in Sweden, there has been some attempt to change this context, both by incentives for school-based change and by regulation and monitoring. This paper attempted to raise questions not only about the effectiveness of particular strategies, but also about the particular discourses of the state which are being constructed around the policies concerned with girls and women. One implication of this discussion is the continued importance of a vigorous critical engagement with education policies concerned with 'equal opportunity' for girls and for women teachers. For such policies construct

contemporary Australian social democracy as prominently concerned with reconstructing Australia on behalf of women. Yet the policies also reconfirm women as the other who are the problem and on whom action must be focussed.

Notes

1. By 'state-centric', Yeatman means that the state is relatively centralized (like Sweden) rather than dispersed (like the USA). She suggests:

> 'A relatively centralized state structure is conducive to the rationalized social reform orientations of the new class, ie, the class which makes its political, cultural and economic claims on the basis of its cultural capital, its knowledge claims. The new class, wherever it is, tends to view the state as the vehicle of its claims to power as social planners and national policy makers'.
>
> (Yeatman, 1988, p.143)

2. In Australia, around one-third of the student population is educated in independent, fee-charging schools and in the Catholic school system. Both sectors, though referred to as the 'non-government sector', are now heavily supported by Commonwealth Government funds. (see Anderson, 1990a, 1990b)

   Apart from the changing Commonwealth/State relationships outlined in this section, there has been a general move in the past two decades to a more direct political control of the content of schooling. Within the States, Ministers of Education, who are elected politicians, have assumed more direct power relative to education bureaucracies. (See Sherington, 1990)

3. At conferences, and in some talks and writings, Koori women (native Australians, or Aborigines) have in general responded to the women's movement by a sympathy for the sexism experienced by western women, but an insistence that for themselves self-determination, land-rights and anti-racism are the key issues, and that within their own traditional culture the division of labour is not patriarchal. Australian education policies concerned with girls and schooling have commonly treated Kooris and Torres Strait Islanders as a special case in which those communities will have the right to direct how and to what extent general policy initiatives in relation to girls are taken up. This aspect of formal policy is in line with that proposed by the National Aboriginal Education Council, though Koori women writing about schooling in urban settings have also discussed how such schools are both culturally insensitive and also quick to use 'cultural difference' as an excuse for inferior education. (Daylight, 1987; Burney, 1987; Holland, 1987; Yates, 1989) However, while the calls of the *Report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force* (1988) have been accepted in so far as they relate to a

considerable degree of self-determination and some funding support, little has been heard about recommendations related to Aboriginal studies and the problem of racism in the schooling of non-Koori children.

4. In Australia, 'non-English speaking background' is a term commonly used to identify the groups (other than Kooris) making claims against the dominant culture and institutions of being subordinated on ethnic and racial grounds. The descriptor is of course problematic. It encompasses recent immigrants for whom language is a direct issue, but also many Australian-born native English speakers whose parents and grandparents came from Mediterranean countries. Despite the problematic nature of this term, and what is being 'naturalized' by its use, it should alert readers outside Australia to ways in which the history and current ethnic and racial composition of Australia has some significantly different features to the USA, the UK and New Zealand. Women of Turkish, Greek and Italian background have, for example, been prominent in arguing a case against ethnocentric assumptions of a dominant feminism - yet they do not easily fit the term 'women of colour' heard in other countries. For some further discussion of these issues, see Tsolidis, 1984; Castles, Kalantzis, Cope and Morrissey, 1988.

5. As a parallel, a huge increase in Commonwealth funding of 'private' schools was introduced initially by a Labor government in 1973, as part of its attention to 'disadvantage' (many of the schools in the Catholic sector in particular rated high on its various criteria of disadvantage). This funding has steadily been increased and the idea that non-state schools are entitled to have a large part of their recurrent costs funded by the government is now 'naturalized' in current discourse. Here an institutionalized funding mechanism, initiated as part of a strategy to 'compensate disadvantaged students' (and indeed to do this by taking the school community rather than the individual as the focus of action) has been transformed into one of 'individual rights', where all individuals and schools are assumed to be entitled to an individual share of taxes allocated to schools. A policy to compensate disadvantage through the mechanism it established has been turned into a central source of disadvantage by strengthening the viability and size of the private sector and making the state sector a more residual one. (cf.Anderson, 1990a, 1990b; Yates, 1990b; Connell, White and Johnston, 1990)

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